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ABSTRACT

A plan was devised to improve the behavior and attitudes of selected junior high school students who, as a result of continual classroom misbehavior, had been frequently referred by classroom teachers to the assistant principal. The program involved organization and use of resource persons already available in the school (including guidance counselors, the work experience coordinator, and the substance abuse specialist) to work with each student in the target group on a regular basis for the first nine-week term of the 1975-76 school year. Discipline records from the previous school year were used to identify participants. Each student's cumulative guidance record was reviewed. A personal visit to each child's residence was made by the assistant principal. Each student was withdrawn from one of his regularly scheduled classes to participate in the program, and the progress of each pupil was monitored through the use of commercially available "interim progress report" forms. Results indicated that disciplinary referrals to the assistant principal for each student were reduced by 50 percent, that classroom conduct grades for each student and the overall group improved markedly, and that attitudes of participants (as measured by pretesting and posttesting with district-developed instruments designed to assess student morale) were generally more positive at the conclusion of the program than they had been at the outset.
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ED136373

Organizing and Using Resource Personnel
to Improve Student Behavior

by Frank R. Petruzielo¹

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Introductory Practicum
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I. INTRODUCTION

In most urban junior high schools, one could identify a small number of students whom classroom teachers continually refer to the office of an assistant principal (or dean) for disciplinary reasons. Typically, these are youngsters who continue to misbehave despite repeated conferences with the assistant principal, frequent letters and telephone calls to parents, and various forms of the usual punitive actions (e.g. detentions, corporal punishment, internal and external suspensions, etc.).

Such students are constant sources of annoyance and disruption to their teachers and, needless to say, they usually require an inordinate amount of the assistant principal's time and energy.

Statement of the Problem

During the 1974-75 school year, several hundred disciplinary referrals were made to the assistant principal's office. While the vast majority of these concerned students who had only one or two referrals in the course of the school year, it was noted that 13 pupils (identified as "repeaters") had each accounted for 10 to 23 referrals.

Conceptualizing a Solution

There were a number of resource personnel in the school available to work with individual or small groups of students (i.e. three guidance

counselors, a substance abuse specialist, a work-experience coordinator, an occupational specialist, and the school-center-for-special-instruction teacher).¹ In addition, there were several trained peer counselors and peer tutors who regularly offered their services to interested students.

Essentially, the plan of this practicum was to develop and implement a program through which each of the "repeaters" was scheduled to meet, on a regular basis and for specific purposes, with each of the various resource personnel and trained peers throughout the first nine-week term of the 1975-76 school year. It was hypothesized that such a program would result in improved behavior and more positive attitudes toward school on the part of these students.

Toward these ends, the objectives of the practicum were (1) to reduce by 50% the rate of disciplinary referrals for each of the selected pupils; (2) to improve, by at least one letter grade per class, teacher conduct assessment for each of the selected students; and (3) to significantly improve attitudes of the selected pupils toward school (as measured by pre- and post-testing with the Dade County School Morale Attitude Survey).

II. PRACTICUM DESIGN

Preliminary to the major stages of the practicum, an informal check was made with area and district administrators for similar work in progress and a thorough review of relevant research was carried out. Notwithstanding existence of school-centers-for-special-instruction (alternative to external

¹See Glossary for role descriptions of resource personnel. Each secondary school in Dade County is allocated one or more of each of the resource personnel participating in this program. It should be noted that these staff members contributed their time to this program while maintaining their usual responsibilities.

suspension programs) in each secondary school in Dade County and the establishment of a full-time, alternative facility for students who cannot function in a regular school program, indications were that no secondary schools in the district had developed or implemented a specific plan or guidelines for using resource personnel available in the school to improve the behavior and attitude of "repeaters."

While the research literature was replete with suggestions for teachers on how to improve overall classroom discipline, little was written about working with students who evidence continual disruptive behavior in other than a classroom setting. Despite the helpful criticisms and suggestions of Holt, Kohl, Postman and Weingartner, Silberman, and a host of others, one is indeed awed by the dearth of specific programs designed to deal with the real problems of today's urban schools.

Identifying the "repeaters," the first stage of this program, was not a difficult task. It required an analysis of 1974-75 discipline records and formulation of a break-down according to the number of referrals for each student. Results indicated that 13 particular seventh and eighth grade students had each accounted for 10 to 23 referrals in the course of the school year.

The next stage included four major steps: (a) a careful review of each child's cumulative guidance record with the appropriate counselor;² (b) initial sessions with each of the selected students to explain the program, administer the attitude survey,³ discuss individual abilities,

²A form was developed for summarizing pertinent information and data obtained from the records (see Appendix).

³This is an approved Dade County instrument designed for the purpose of annually assessing student attitudes toward school (see Appendix).

problems, and needs, and encourage basic goal-setting; (c) a personal visit by the assistant principal to each pupil's residence to explain and discuss the program and to enlist parent support; and (d) recording and analysis of 1974-75 final term teacher assessments of classroom conduct for each student.

The third stage constituted the main thrust of the practicum. It included explaining the program to the various resource persons available in the school (i.e. guidance counselors, substance abuse specialist, peer tutors, etc.); formulating and implementing the program through which each of the selected students was scheduled to meet on a regular basis with the various resource persons for specific purposes; and developing a process for monitoring the progress of each student as he proceeded through the program.⁴

After initial identification, explanations, and pre-testing, each student was permitted to withdraw from one of his current, regularly-scheduled classes in order to participate in the program.⁵ Fortunately, these choices randomly resulted in groups of two or three "repeaters" available per period.

A calendar was then developed whereby each of the aforementioned resource persons was charged with planning specific objectives and activities for two days of instruction. Each was encouraged to develop plans in keeping with usual areas of responsibilities, subject to individual needs of selected students. These plans, submitted to and approved by the

⁴Interim progress reports for each student were completed periodically by classroom teachers. They were useful for monitoring and adjusting to individual student progress, and in maintaining communication with the parents (see Appendix).

⁵The first term of the 1975-76 school year had already begun.

assistant principal prior to implementation, included value-clarification activities, role-playing exercises, simulated job interviews, course selection information, tips on effective study techniques, and field trips . . . to name a few.

After the selected students had spent two full periods with each of the respective resource persons (a process which lasted approximately one month), each was given a choice of two areas of concentration in which to spend the remainder of their time in the program: occupational exploration or peer counseling.

During this final stage, seven students chose to participate, on a daily basis, in the school's ongoing peer counseling program; indeed, three of these pupils actually became active peer counselors prior to the end of the term. The other six students decided to spend their remaining time exploring specific vocational alternatives with the help of the school's occupational specialist; as a direct result of these efforts, two of the latter students were subsequently placed in part-time jobs after school, thus enabling them to contribute to their family's income.

III. EVALUATION

Presentation of the Data

The composition of the "repeaters" was mixed. It may be noted that six participants were Black (two males and four females); and, of the seven White students in the program (six males and one female), two males were of Spanish language origin. Standardized achievement test results in cumulative guidance records indicated that ability levels in reading and mathematics ranged from stanine 2 to stanine 8. A comparison of the number of disciplinary referrals to the assistant principal for each student in the program is charted in Table 1.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF DISCIPLINAR REFERRALS
TO THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Student	Number of Referrals for 1974-75 (four terms)	Number of Referrals for First Term (1974-75)	Number of Referrals for First Term (1975-76)
"A"	23	7	a
"B"	17	9	0
"C"	16	11	0
"D"	15	4	2
"E"	14	4	0
"F"	13	3	1
"G"	12	2	b
"H"	11	4	2
"I"	11	1	c
"J"	10	6	2
"K"	10	3	0
"L"	10	2	0
"M"	10	7	2
Totals	172	63	9

^aStudent "A" was placed in a full-time learning disability class prior to the second week of the program.

^bStudent "G" requested that she be permitted to return to her regular class after one week in the program.

^cThis student's family moved in the middle of the term. She transferred to another school in the district at that time.

Classroom conduct grades for the fourth (last) term of the 1974-75 school year are compared to those earned for the first term of 1975-76 in Table 2.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF CLASSROOM CONDUCT GRADES*

Student	Classroom Conduct Grades for <u>Last Term</u> of the 1974-75 School Year	Classroom Conduct Grades for <u>First Term</u> of the 1975-76 School Year
"B"	F F F D D A	D D C C A A
"C"	D D D C C A	F D C C C A
"D"	F F D D D D	C B A A A A
"E"	F F D D C A	B B A A A A
"F"	F F F D D A	F B B A A A
"H"	F F F D C A	F F D B A A
"J"	F F F C C C	F D D D C A
"K"	F F D D C A	F C C B B A
"L"	F F C C C C	B B A A A A
"M"	F D D C C A	F F D D A A
Totals	F D C B A	F D C B A
	21 18 14 0 7	8 9 9 12 22

*Note: Since subjects and teachers changed from one school year to the next, it was not possible to compare conduct grade changes in the same classroom with the same teacher.

The Secondary form of the Dade County School Morale Attitude Survey (see Appendix) was administered to each student at the outset of the program (September 8, 1975) and again at its conclusion (November 13, 1975). This instrument consists of four scales which assess pupils' feelings about themselves and their school. The School Morale scale indicates the extent to which pupils enjoy attending the school. Pupils who have a positive attitude on this scale usually have friends at school, appreciate the tone of the faculty and administration, and participate in extra-curricular activities. The Instruction scale reflects pupil attitudes toward the school's instructional program. Pupils who have a positive attitude on this scale find the instructional program interesting, challenging, and sufficiently diverse to meet their needs. The School Plant scale reflects the pupils' perceptions concerning the adequacy of the school facilities. Students who have a positive attitude on this scale usually view the school grounds, classrooms, auditorium, athletic facilities, and other areas of the school as being satisfactory. The Self As Learner scale indicates how pupils view themselves as learners. Students who have a positive attitude on this scale usually enjoy learning and find mastery of skills and knowledge challenging and rewarding.

During countywide attitude testing in 1974-75, the Secondary form of the test was administered to over 20,000 Dade County junior high school students. The countywide results for the School Morale Attitude Survey represent the average percentages of positive responses on each of the four scales. Since each scale consists of 12 items, a result of 60.0 would indicate that, on the average, students responded to 7.2 of the 12 items positively ($12 \times .60 = 7.2$).

The percentages of positive responses on each of the four scales for Dade County junior high school students appear in Table 3. The percentages of total positive responses are also included, as are the conversions to average numbers of positive responses (shown in parentheses).⁶

TABLE 3
SCHOOL MORALE ATTITUDE SURVEY
PERCENTAGES OF POSITIVE RESPONSES
DECEMBER, 1974

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Junior High</u> N=23,135
School Morale	52.2 (6.3)
Instruction	63.3 (7.6)
School Plant	51.6 (6.2)
Self As Learner	60.8 (7.3)
Total	57.1 (6.8)

In Table 4, the actual number of positive responses of each student on pre- and post- School Morale Attitude Surveys are compared. Differences in the number of positive responses of each student are listed by individual scales and in overall totals.

⁶Excerpted from "School Morale Attitude Survey in Dade County Public Schools, 1974-75," Planning and Evaluation Department.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF POSITIVE RESPONSES

ON PRE-AND POST- SCHOOL MORALE ATTITUDE SURVEYS

	<u>SCHOOL MORALE</u> County Average:6.3			<u>INSTRUCTION</u> County Average:7.6			<u>SCHOOL PLANT</u> County Average:6.2			<u>SELF AS LEARNER</u> County Average:7.3			
PUPIL	Pre-	Post-	Diff.	Pre-	Post-	Diff.	Pre-	Post-	Diff.	Pre-	Post-	Diff.	Total Diff.
"B"	4	4	0	10	7	-3	2	2	0	9	7	-2	-5
"C"	6	10	+4	7	10	+3	9	9	0	7	7	0	+7
"D"	7	7	0	7	4	-3	2	2	0	3	4	+1	-2
"E"	3	3	0	8	9	+1	2	2	-1	4	6	+2	+2
"F"	5	9	+4	2	5	+3	7	9	+2	6	7	+1	+10
"H"	5	6	+1	3	3	0	4	10	+6	2	3	+1	+8
"J"	7	4	-3	10	7	-3	11	7	-4	8	7	-1	-11
"K"	9	7	-2	7	7	0	3	6	+3	6	9	+3	+2
"L"	5	6	+1	6	7	+1	6	8	+2	6	7	+1	+5
"M"	5	6	+1	8	9	+1	7	3	-4	9	11	+2	0

Analysis of the Data

In comparing the number of first-term, 1974-75 and first-term, 1975-76 disciplinary referrals to the assistant principal for each student (see Table 1), one notes a reduction by at least 50% in the number of referrals for each pupil. Of particular significance is the fact that five "repeaters" had no referrals during the first term of 1975-76, and no "repeaters" had more than two referrals for that term. The reduction in the number of total referrals for the group from 63 to 9 would also appear to be noteworthy.

Changes in classroom conduct grades from one school term to the next are listed in Table 2. While not every student improved conduct assessments by at least one letter grade in each class, it may be pointed out that the group's overall percentage of conduct D's and F's dropped from 65% (for the last term of 1974-75) to 28% (for the first term of 1975-76). Similarly, conduct A's and B's for the group rose from 12% to 57% during that same time period.

Finally, several points may be made in reference to the data provided in Table 4, which compares pre- and post-test responses on the School Morale Attitude Survey. First, on each of the four scales that were measured, a majority of students had the same number of or more positive responses on the post-test than they had had on the pre-test. Second, a majority of post-test scores compare more favorably with the listed county averages on each scale than did pre-test scores. Last, total differences in numbers of positive responses for each student show that a clear majority of "repeaters" responded more positively on the post-test than they had on the pre-test.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this practicum was to improve the in-school behavior and attitudes of a selected group of students who had been frequently referred to the assistant principal by classroom teachers. It would appear that the previously discussed results indeed demonstrate that these objectives have been met. In effect, using resource personnel available in the school to meet and work with these pupils on a regular basis throughout one school term resulted in: (1) a significant reduction in the number of disciplinary referrals to the assistant principal for each student, (2) improved individual classroom conduct grades, and (3) generally more positive attitudes toward school on the part of these pupils.

While it is recognized that there are some inherent statistical weaknesses in the program's evaluation dimension (e.g. the "Hawthorne" effects of withdrawing from a regular class and participating in a "pilot" program), the practical, methodological, and conceptual successes of the endeavor have resulted in two personal commitments: first, the decision to share the results with other administrators in the district;⁷ and second, the decision to use the program during the first term of ensuing school years as an additional means of improving student discipline.

* * *

⁷The Area Pupil Personnel Services Director has requested that a presentation of the program be made at a scheduled area meeting for administrators.

GLOSSARY

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: A full-time professional staff member, certified by the State of Florida, Department of Education, in secondary school guidance and counseling; major areas of concern and responsibility include:

- (a) various individual and group counseling services.
- (b) cumulative guidance record-keeping.
- (c) educational/personal/occupational information.
- (d) follow-up and research.

OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALIST: A full-time professional staff member involved in the following activities:

- (a) disseminating occupational information to students.
- (b) assisting teachers in providing occupational information to students in their classes.
- (c) organizing "vocational fairs" in which representatives of various occupations present relevant data and information to interested students.

SCHOOL-CENTER-FOR-SPECIAL-INSTRUCTION TEACHER: A full-time professional staff member, assisted by a full-time clerical aide; major duties and responsibilities include:

- (a) supervising students who are referred to this "center" by the assistant principal.
- (b) maintaining communication with parents of students assigned to the "center."
- (c) working with the assistant principal, teachers, parents, and students on matters of pupil misbehavior and truancy.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SPECIALIST: A full-time professional staff member with specific responsibilities for:

- (a) assisting classroom teachers and administrators in providing programs relative to abuse of various "substances" (e.g. alcohol, drugs, etc.).
- (b) organizing, implementing, and monitoring the school's peer counseling program.
- (c) counseling individual and small groups of students on matters of personal and general concern.

WORK-EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR: A full-time professional staff member who:

- (a) teaches three class sections of "Employability Skills."
- (b) assists interested students in securing jobs in the community.
- (c) supervises participating students in school and on the job.

APPENDIX

CUMULATIVE GUIDANCE RECORD REVIEW

LAST	FIRST	M.I.	AGE	GRADE (1975-76)
------	-------	------	-----	-----------------

1. Teacher Comments:

2. Grades:

Scholastic -

Effort -

Conduct -

3. Standardized Test Results:

Paragraph Meaning -

Arithmetic Computation -

Mathematics Concepts -

4. Attendance:

5. Health:

6. Psychological Information:

7. Other:

SECONDARY FORM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL MORALE
ATTITUDE SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: This is not a test. This booklet lists a series of statements about your school. Read each statement carefully and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement. If you agree, blacken the space under the letter "a" on your answer sheet for that statement. If you disagree, blacken the space under the letter "d" on your answer sheet for that statement. Please, answer every question.

This is part of a project being done in many different schools in the county. No one at your school will see your answers. They will be scored elsewhere, so answer as honestly as you can. You will probably find that you generally agree with some of the statements and generally disagree with others. Do not answer as you think you should, but the way you really feel. Thank you.

1. There is no one in my school that I could go to with a serious problem.
2. Often I'm afraid that I'll do something wrong at school.
3. I am very proud of my school.
4. I am lucky that I get to come to this school.
5. We don't have enough dance programs at this school.
6. I'd rather go to this school than another one.
7. I don't want to change anything at this school.
8. No one seems to understand me at school.
9. If I were a teacher, I would want to teach in this school.
10. Most of the students at this school like it here.
11. Most of the students here aren't very interested in team sports.
12. Some students can do wrong things and never get in trouble.

13. I feel what I learn in school will help me when I graduate.
14. The teachers here have enough time to help me with the school work that I don't understand.
15. I am not interested in most of the courses offered at this school.
16. The things I learn in school are a waste of time.
17. I am usually made to feel that what I have to offer in class discussion is important.
18. If I don't do my school work, nobody really cares.
19. Sometimes, I get so tired of school work, I feel like quitting.
20. Doing homework helps me learn a lot.
21. I get enough chances to work with other students on school projects.
22. One important thing I'm learning at this school is how to get along with others.
23. The more difficult my school work is the harder I want to try.
24. I can learn more important things outside of school than inside.
25. There is enough room in our school library.
26. Generally speaking, this school is a comfortable place in which to learn.
27. I wish I went to a school which had fewer students than this one.
28. The bathrooms at this school are satisfactory.
29. I don't think the gym at my school is big enough.
30. I think we have enough space in the P.E. locker rooms.
31. I have enough locker space for my books.
32. The classrooms at this school are comfortable.
33. The science labs at this school are well equipped.
34. I am proud of the way this building looks.
35. Our auditorium seems to be too small.
36. When I go to the library, I feel it's too crowded for me to get my work done.
37. The people at this school make me feel like they want me to learn.
38. I usually like to come to school.
39. I can usually get extra help with my lessons if I want it.
40. I have trouble keeping up with the other students in my class.
41. I have to learn things that I don't need to know.
42. I do not ask a lot of questions in class.
43. Learning at school is easy for me.
44. I am usually allowed to take my classroom books home when I want to.
45. I get disgusted with myself if I don't do as well as I should.
46. My classes are uninteresting and boring.
47. I like to make the best grades possible.
48. I can read a long while without getting tired.

STOP AT NUMBER 48

INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

NAUTILUS JR. HIGH SCHOOL
Miami Beach, Florida
Guidance Department
532-3481

STUDENT'S NAME

CLASS

DATE

NOTICE TO PARENTS: This report offers an opportunity for better understanding of the student's current achievement. Please study the comments below in order that steps can be taken to bring about progress, where needed, by the end of the period.

SUBJECT:	RECENT PROGRESS: <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	PRESENT STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> PASSING <input type="checkbox"/> BORDERLINE <input type="checkbox"/> FAILING
RECOMMENDATIONS: <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUED GOOD WORK <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED PREPARATION AND STUDY <input type="checkbox"/> BETTER WRITTEN WORK <input type="checkbox"/> MORE SERIOUS APPROACH <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED CLASS PARTICIPATION <input type="checkbox"/> ADDITIONAL HELP NEEDED <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ (Teacher)		

SUBJECT:	RECENT PROGRESS: <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	PRESENT STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> PASSING <input type="checkbox"/> BORDERLINE <input type="checkbox"/> FAILING
RECOMMENDATIONS: <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUED GOOD WORK <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED PREPARATION AND STUDY <input type="checkbox"/> BETTER WRITTEN WORK <input type="checkbox"/> MORE SERIOUS APPROACH <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED CLASS PARTICIPATION <input type="checkbox"/> ADDITIONAL HELP NEEDED <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ (Teacher)		

SUBJECT:	RECENT PROGRESS: <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	PRESENT STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> PASSING <input type="checkbox"/> BORDERLINE <input type="checkbox"/> FAILING
RECOMMENDATIONS: <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUED GOOD WORK <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED PREPARATION AND STUDY <input type="checkbox"/> BETTER WRITTEN WORK <input type="checkbox"/> MORE SERIOUS APPROACH <input type="checkbox"/> INCREASED CLASS PARTICIPATION <input type="checkbox"/> ADDITIONAL HELP NEEDED <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ (Teacher)		

SUBJECT:	RECENT PROGRESS: <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	PRESENT STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> PASSING <input type="checkbox"/> BORDERLINE <input type="checkbox"/> FAILING
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SUBJECT:	RECENT PROGRESS: <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	PRESENT STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> PASSING <input type="checkbox"/> BORDERLINE <input type="checkbox"/> FAILING
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